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Buddhist India. By T. W. RHYS DAVIDS, LL.D., Ph.D. [The Story of the Nations.] (New York : G. P. Putnam's Sons ; London : T. Fisher Unwin. 1903. Pp. xv, 332.)

THE purpose of the book is the presentation in popular form of the life and history of India during the period of Buddhistic ascendancy. This presentation is professedly from the point of view of the Rajput, and not of the Brahman ; accordingly it is based (the records of the Jains being accessible only in fragments) almost exclusively upon the Buddhistic literature. The Vedic *Samhitās*, *Brāhmaṇas*, and certain *Upanisads* are cited as testimony for pre-Buddhistic conditions ; but, in accordance with a theory to be mentioned later, the testimony of the rest of the Vedic and of the classic literature is not considered admissible as contemporary evidence for the greater part of the period in question. Now the intimacy and accuracy of Professor Rhys Davids's knowledge of Buddhistic literature are universally recognized, and the unfailing interest with which one follows his exposition is the best testimony to the tact and skill with which he has applied this knowledge to the task of presenting to his readers a picture of this phase of Indian life. As a further merit of the presentation should be emphasized the fact that the liberal supply of references to the texts themselves make the work of value to the student, without detracting in the least from the general reader's enjoyment of its style and contents.

The book begins with a description of the systems of government in India at the time of the rise of Buddhism, the monarchies, the clans under a republican form of government, and the nations. The next three chapters are devoted to the social organization, the first and third being descriptions of life in the village and town respectively, while the second, on "Social Grades", argues against the existence at this period of a system of sharply-defined castes. Next, under the heading "Economic Conditions", is given a list of the various trades and avocations, an account of the system of traffic and coinage (with an appendix on the most ancient coins of India), an estimate of the wealth of the country, and a description of its trade-routes.

To the history of the introduction and development of writing two chapters are devoted. In the main, the author is in agreement with the results reached by Bühler, but ignores his perfectly sound argument (*Indische Palaeographie*, 18) that the oldest known form of the *Brāhmī* was an alphabet elaborated for the Sanskrit language by scholarly Brahmins. The following chapters deal with the development of the languages and literatures of India in general, and of the *Pāli* literature and of the *Jātaka* book in particular.

Very interesting is the section on religion, the first chapter of which describes, under the caption "Animism", the popular religious beliefs of pre-Buddhistic times, and contains a valuable collection of the allusions in the Buddhist literature to these beliefs. The practices condemned are evidently Atharvanic in character ; many of them in fact are treated in

the *Atharva-Pariçistas*, while others crop out only in the later works on astrology. The next chapter is a brilliant though too unsympathetic account of the development of Brahmanism down to the time of Buddha. It is, I think, to be regretted that the author did not see fit to include at this point a sketch of Buddhism. The last section of the book is devoted to history in a narrower sense, and deals in three chapters with the great monarchs Chandragupta, Açoka, and Kaniska.

The theory already alluded to, which tinges a great part of the book, is one which has appeared in various forms since Senart's article in the *Journal Asiatique* in 1886. Space does not admit of its full statement, still less of its discussion. Its basis is that the order of the appearance of the Middle Indian dialects and the classic Sanskrit in the inscriptions is the order of their origin. So the author (p. 139) considers it "clear why Pali books written in India, or books in a dialect allied to Pali, or in a mixture of such a dialect and forms taken from pure Sanskrit, are each of them older than the books written in classical Sanskrit"; and (p. 315) that it is not at all impossible that Açvaghosa's *Buddha Carita* may be "the very earliest literary work written in regular Sanskrit for the use of the laity". Whether the phrase, "for the use of the laity", is meant to concede the earlier origin of the *Sūtra* literature it is impossible to determine; it would seem not, since in the table (pp. 153 ff.) no place is left for the *Sūtras* unless they are to be classed (inexactly) with classic Sanskrit, and on page 32 the author favors "the wholesale recasting of brahman literature in the Gupta period". It is of course but a corollary to this view that one may (p. 158) "happen, in reliance on the priestly books, to antedate, by about a thousand years, the victory of the priests".

Similar conclusions with regard to the date of the classic literature have recently been indicated by Franke as one of the possibilities following from the inscriptional data collected in his *Pāli und Sanskrit* (Strassburg, 1902). In spite of the independent concurrence of two so eminent Pāli scholars, it is, however, safe to predict that the views will not gain acceptance. The reasons are briefly: that there is sufficient direct evidence to the contrary; it forces the theory of too artificial an origin for Sanskrit, which was undoubtedly based on a spoken dialect; it is contradicted by the continuity of development of the language; and the facts of the inscriptions admit of another and simpler explanation.

Fortunately the value of the book does not depend upon one's acceptance of this theory. The author's plea for the necessity of a "just and proportionate use" of Buddhistic literature in dealing with the history and institutions of India will meet with no opposition, and even those who, like myself, believe that the author has gone too far towards the other extreme must be grateful to Professor Rhys Davids for this picture of India as the Buddhists saw it.

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